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ABSTRACT

An action research project described a program for improving elementary children's recreational reading habits through a combination of modeling by the teacher plus incentives to enhance students' intrinsic motivation to read for enjoyment. The targeted population consisted of three suburban public schools, grades 2 and 4. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that teachers often fail to sufficiently model recreational reading. Television is a major deterrent to children's intrinsic motivation to read for fun. Parents do not sufficiently model and/or encourage habits conducive to the promotion of recreational reading. Surveys revealed that recreational reading is near the bottom of students' priority lists when given other recreational choices. Solution strategies, suggested by literature, combined with an analysis of surveys and teacher observations, resulted in the selection of modeling and incentives to promote recreational reading habits. In addition, activities such as Sustained Silent Reading on a daily basis and student sharing opportunities were implemented. (Contains 11 figures of data; appendixes contain parent letters/surveys, a student survey, a teacher survey on reading habits, a teacher observation checklist, a reading log form, Venn diagrams, and a cut-out headband in the shape of a frog.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING CHILDREN'S HABITS IN RECREATIONAL READING

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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Preliminary Abstract

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Title: Improving Children's Habits In Recreational Reading

This project describes a program for improving elementary children's recreational reading habits through a combination of modeling by the teacher plus incentives to enhance students' intrinsic motivation to read for enjoyment. The targeted population consisted of three-suburban public schools, grades two and four.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that teachers often fail to sufficiently model recreational reading. Television is a major deterrent to children's intrinsic motivation to read for fun. Parents do not sufficiently model and/or encourage habits conducive to the promotion of recreational reading. Surveys revealed that recreational reading is near the bottom of students' priority lists when given other recreational choices.

Solution strategies, suggested by literature, combined with an analysis of surveys and teacher observations, resulted in the selection of modeling and incentives to promote recreational reading habits. In addition, activities such as Sustained Silent Reading on a daily basis and student sharing opportunities were implemented.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Problem Statement:

"Americans spend 1,266 more hours watching television each year than reading" (Chicago Sun Times, April 1997). How can we encourage children in the United States to read more for pleasure? How can we develop positive reading habits among students in grades K-8? This action research project developed activities that children used both at home and at school to increase the amount of time students chose to read for fun (recreational reading). An examination of the strategies employed and the results obtained is the focus of this study.

Description of Immediate Demographics of Schools:

Specific demographic data for each school sited is presented in Figures 1-5 (pp.3-5).

School A Demographics: School A is a general K-5 public school, with self-contained classrooms for grades K-4. At the fifth grade level, the students change classes for reading. The district as a whole has a strong P.T.A. program. The district promotes reading by allowing guest authors, "Book It" incentives, a program sponsored by Pizza Hut, and Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.) activities. However, there is still a need to encourage students to read on their own for enjoyment.

School B Demographics: School B is a public, suburban school. Students in this district are all required to wear uniforms (blue pants, white shirts, and dark dress shoes). School B houses children from kindergarten through sixth grade. Eighty-seven point four percent of the children come from low-income families. School B has a departmentalized program. Students, grades one through six, travel to six different classes a day for forty minutes per class period. Subjects

include spelling and writing, reading, math, social studies, science, and English. The program has been in effect for four years and has shown positive academic gains.

In order to help with recreational reading, School B participates in "Book It", a program sponsored by Pizza Hut. School B partakes in this program every year with students from grades one through six. Many teachers also have student libraries in their classrooms. Students are allowed to check out books to bring home to read for fun.

School C Demographics: School C is located in a large southwest suburb. The total enrollment at School C is 475 students. This is a public school with K-6 self-contained classrooms. There are currently 18 teachers employed within this school. The community contains middle to lower class families. To balance the district's racial make-up, children are bused from a nearby suburb to disperse African-American students throughout the district.

Currently, School C has two motivational type programs in place for aiding students to read recreationally. They are "Book It", a program sponsored by Pizza Hut, and 600 Minutes, a program sponsored by Six Flags Great America. The majority of teachers do not incorporate S.S.R. into their daily routines. This year, the school attempted to raise money and promote reading by having a fundraiser called "Pennies for Pages."

School C has a very strong P.T.A. The P.T.A. sponsors a Reflections Contest that involves a theme that all entries must include. Entries can be in the form of drawings, poetry, music, or stories.

Lastly, two programs that exist to supplement children's reading skills are Reading Recovery and Title I. On average, two students per class require these services.

Demographic Comparisons and Summaries:

The following tables will summarize community and school demographics of all sites in this study. Schools A, B, and C are suburban public schools.

Figure 1

Community

	School A	School B	School C
Total Population	26,203	32,966	14,402
Median Income	$46,699.00	$31,534.00	$44,706.00

Figure 1 indicates that School B has double the community population than C.

Figure 2

School Demographics

	School A	School B	School C
Total Enrollment	384	151	449
Average Class Size	25	24	25
Attendance Rate	95.2	93.3	94.8
Mobility Rate	9.9	36.9	10.6
Number of Schools in District	4	11	5

Even though the total enrollment for Schools A-C is diverse, the average class size is about 24 pupils per teacher. The mobility rate for School B is about three times the rate of Schools A and C.

Figure 3

Ethnic/Racial Background of Students

	School A	School B	School C
White	97.4	.7	79.7
Black	1.3	98.7	10.2
Asian	.8	0	.8
Hispanic	.5	.7	8.9
Native American	0	0	.2

School A and School C have a predominately white population, while School B is predominately black.

Figure 4

Ethnic/Racial Background of Teachers in the District

	School A	School B	School C
White	98.9	73.3	100
Black	0	21.4	0
Asian	0	0	0
Hispanic	1.1	5.3	0
Native American	0	0	0
Males	13.3	14.6	15.2
Females	86.7	85.4	84.8
Total Number	90	206	145

Figure 4 indicates that Schools A and C have a white teaching staff. School B has a predominately white staff but is not limited to this ethnicity. As is customary at the elementary level, females are the majority gender of teachers.

Figure 5

Education/Experience of Teachers in the District

	School A	School B	School C
Average Teaching Experience	16.1	14.2	16.3
Bachelors Degree	65%	76.3%	68.9%
Masters and Above	35%	23.7%	31.1%

According to Figure 5, at least 23% of all teachers have a Masters Degree and above in all three sample schools.

Regional and National Context of Problem:

It can be argued that one of the problems facing children today is that they lack habits and self-motivation to read for recreation. According to a recent study done of one hundred and fifty 5th grade students, 50% read for an average of four minutes a day or less, 30% read two minutes a day, 10% read nothing at all. This translates into 90% of students devoting 1% of their free time to reading books as compared to 30% watching television (Anderson, Fielding, & Wilson, 1988).

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1984) recommends a reasonable amount of television viewing not to exceed 10 hours per week. However Jim Trelease, author of The New Read Aloud Handbook, has research that shows that the nation's three year olds are watching as much television as the nation's 10 year olds- 30 hours per week. Add to that the number of hours spent watching videos, and the average kindergarten graduate has already spent nearly 6,000 hours watching television- more time than it takes to obtain a bachelors degree.

Furthermore, Trelease stated, "Lack of interest in recreational reading is apparent in my studies of private and public, in suburban as well as urban locales" (1989 p. xviii). This was

illustrated when Trelease asked several groups of school age children what they had read lately. The children named their classroom textbooks. This strongly suggests that recreational reading habits need to be developed throughout our nation.

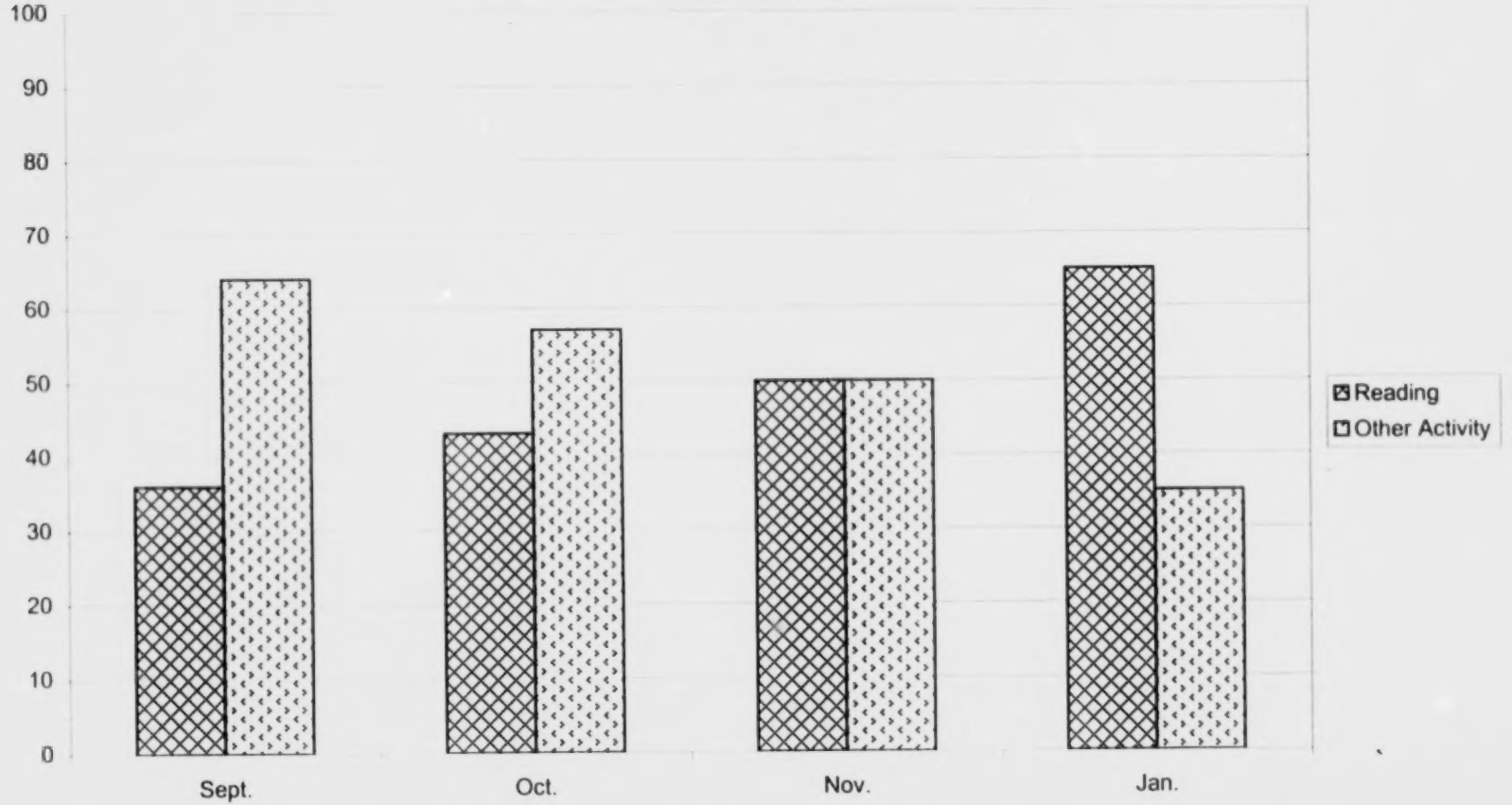
CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSES

Problem Evidence:

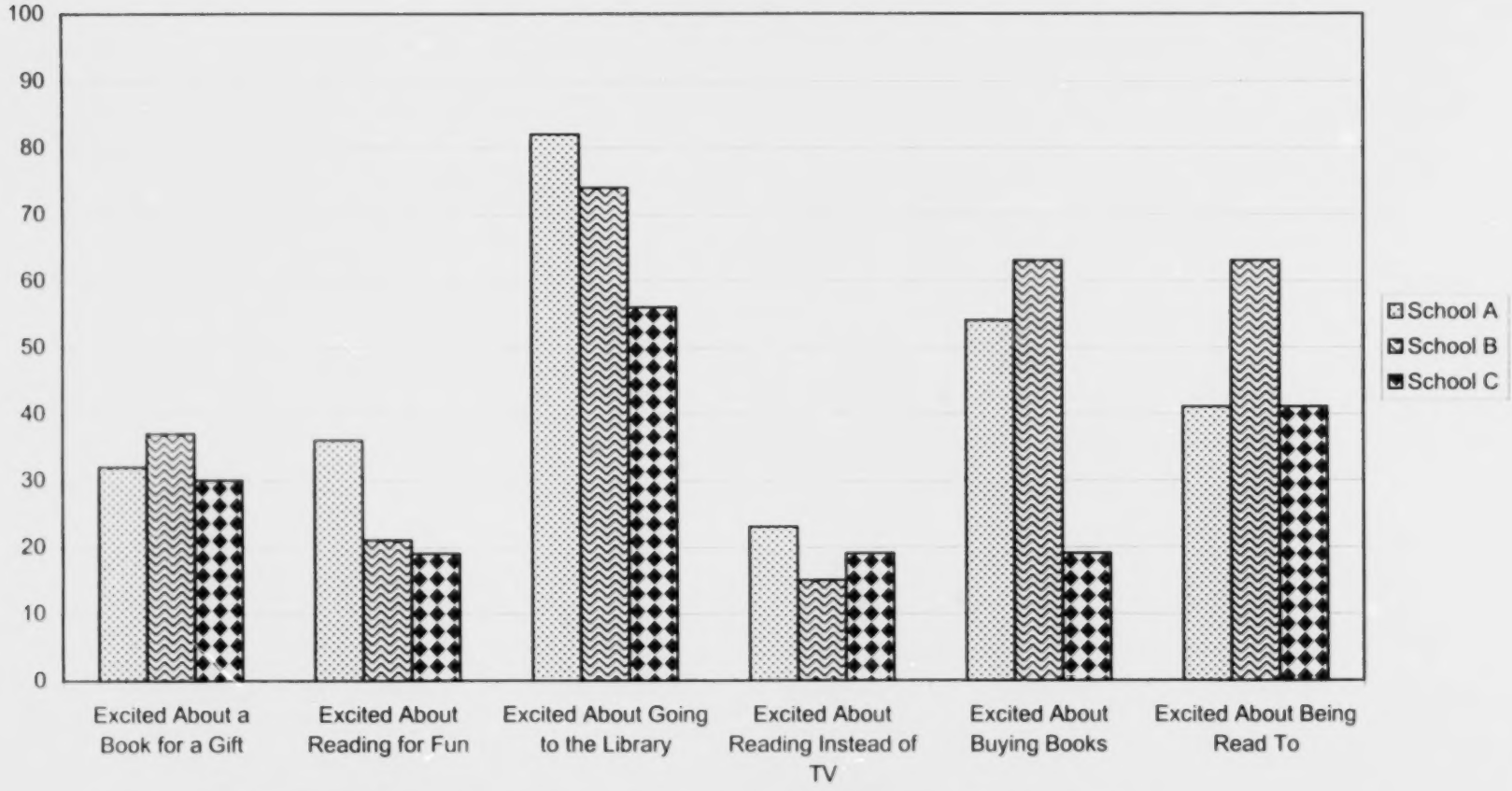
In order to document students' habits in recreational reading, surveys were distributed to 73 students in grades two and four. Other influences that impact these students (teachers and parents) were given a different survey to achieve their perceptions concerning children's habits. In the teacher observation graph, seventy percent of the students chose another activity instead of reading. The student survey shows that over seventy percent of the students watch television instead of reading. On the teacher survey, two of the three schools show a video two to four times a week almost sixty percent of the time. According to the results of the parent survey, School A and C watch television one hundred percent more than reading. The following graphs will summarize the results of these surveys.

Figure 6
Teacher Observations
(All targeted grades combined)



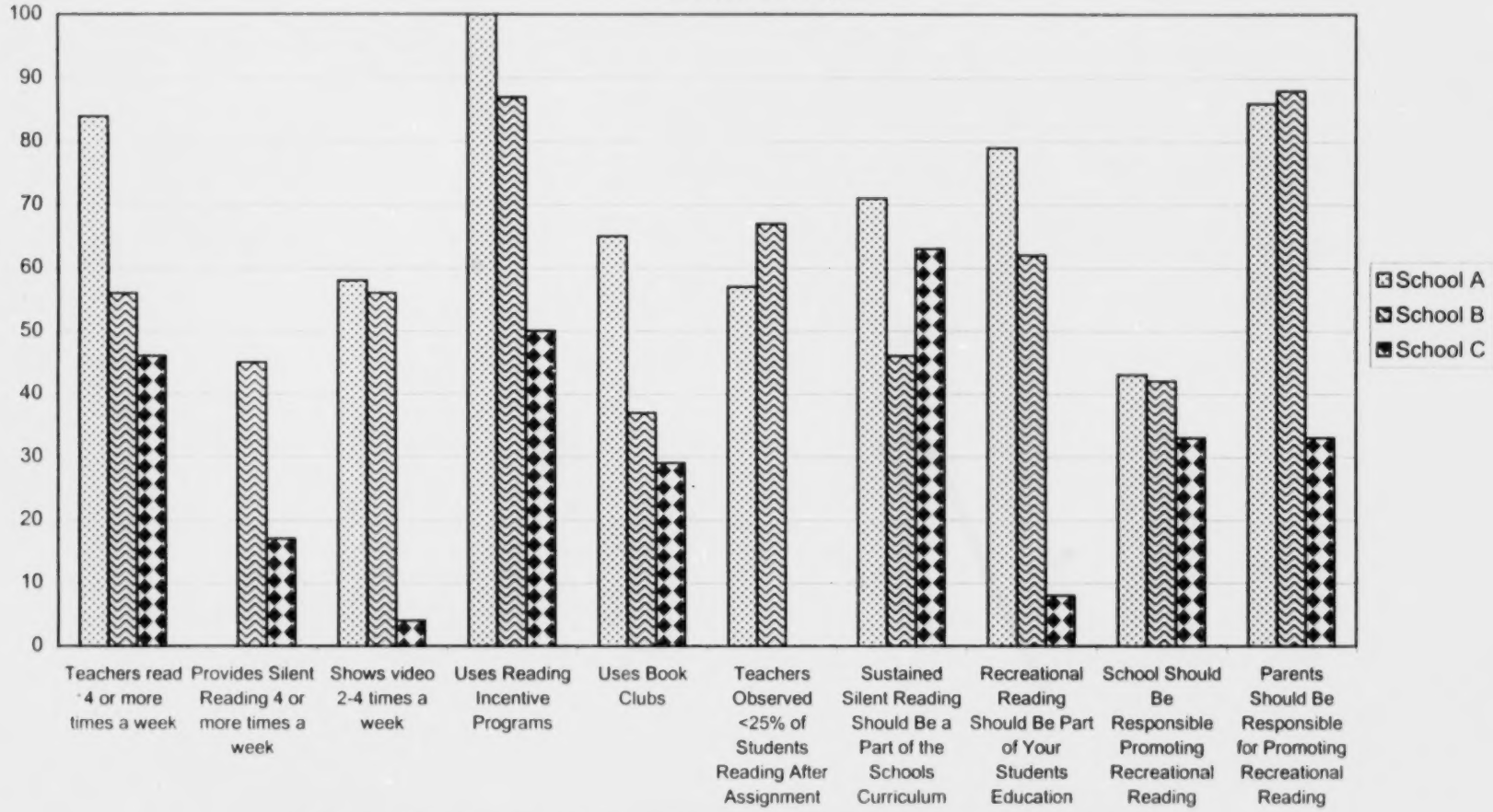
Teacher's provided 15 minutes of free time and observed activity choices. Students chose to read only 36% in Sept with an increase in January to 65%.

Figure 7
Student Survey



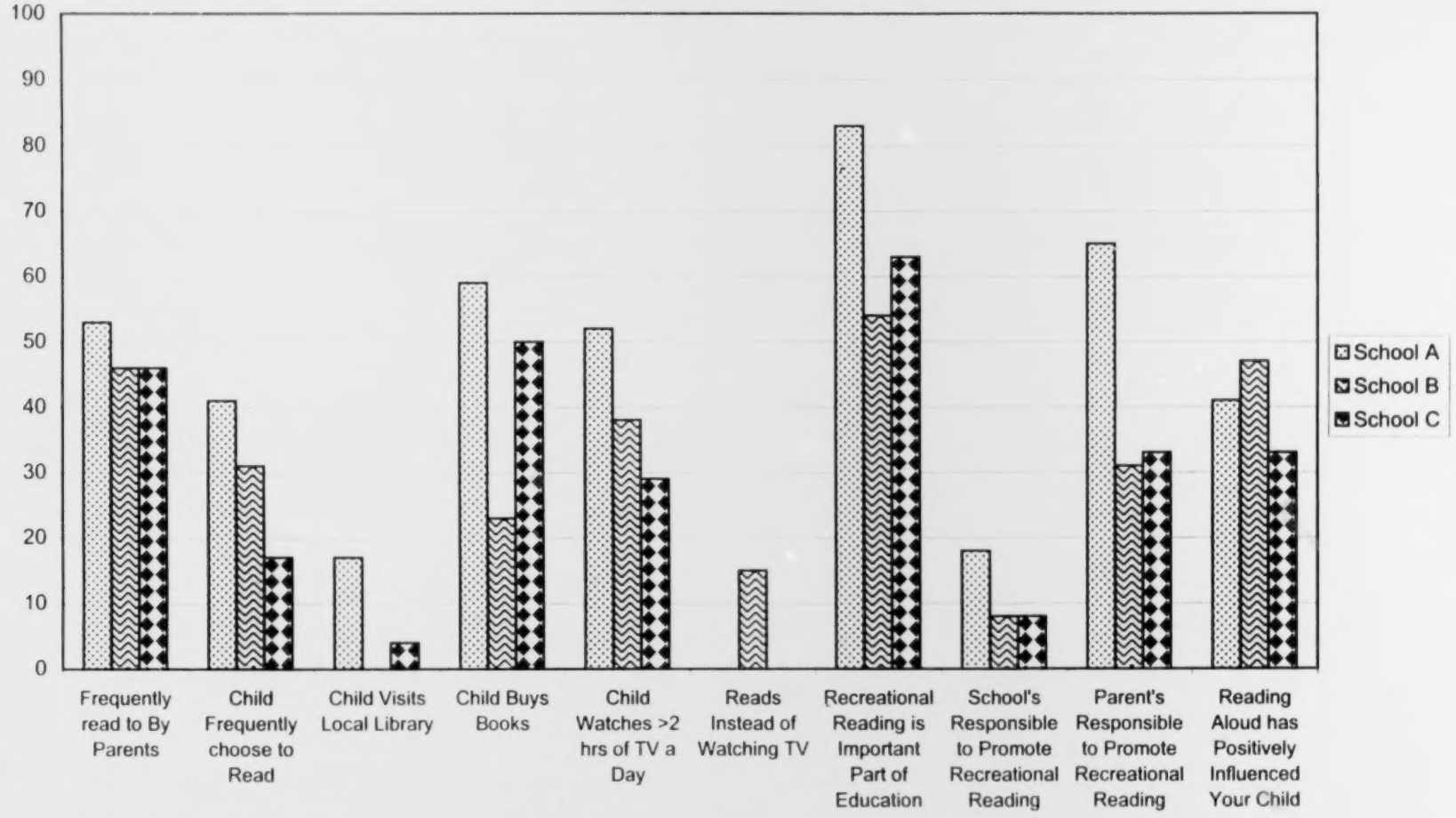
*** Only 21% of the students surveyed indicated that they preferred reading instead of watching TV.**
*** Schools A and B had a higher percentage of interest in buying books and going to the library than Schools C and D.**

Figure 8
Teacher Survey



*** In School A, none of the teachers provided silent reading four or more times a week.**
*** In School C, all of the teachers observed more than 25% of their students reading.**

Figure 9
Parent Survey



* In School B none of the students visted their local library.
* In School A and C, none of the students read instead of watching TV.
* The majority of parents agree recreational reading is an important part of their child's education.

Probable Cause:

According to the experts, recreational reading does not appear to be a consistent habit for the general population of adults and children. Parents, the outside distraction of television and other electronic devices, and teachers can influence these habits. These will be explored in the following section.

As stated by Jim Trelease, " Forty-four percent of U.S. adults do not read a book in a course of a year." In addition, "Half the population no longer reads a daily newspaper. Among the top twenty nations for per capita newspaper circulation, the U.S. places nineteenth- behind nearly all the modern industrial powers." (p. 7-8, 2nd) This suggests that the typical parent does not provide enough role modeling of reading habits to their child.

As our nation approaches the year 2,000, parents are trying to balance the responsibilities of work, home, and family. Consequently, many parents do not have time to read to their child. Rita Newman, author of Can't You See I'm Busy?, reports that parents are spending their time making dinner and paying bills as opposed to reading to their child. Furthermore, Trelease added, " In homes of school age children, 'educational interaction' (like playing with or reading to a child) averaged:

- 12.2 minutes for the 'at home' mother, 7.0 minutes for the father;
- 11.7 minutes for the 'working' mother, 5.6 minutes for the father."

In addition, he reported that sixty eight percent of U.S. adults found their greatest pleasure in television viewing. Ninety-eight percent of the homes in America have a television set (the average have contains 2.3 sets) and that set is on for an average of

seven hours and one minute a day. Fifty-nine percent of teenagers own their own television sets and thirty-three percent own a VCR (Trelease 1989). This strongly suggests that recreational reading has taken a "back seat" to television and video rental entertainment.

Paul Copperman, president of the Institute of Reading Development and author of The Literacy Hoax, ponders the following: Consider what a child misses during the 15,000 hours from birth to age seventeen he spends in front of the television screen. Exactly what does television offer that is so valuable it can replace reading activities that will transform an impulsive, self-absorbed child into a critically thinking adult? Children, between the ages of 2-18, are exposed to over 400 commercials per week, which includes 100,000 beer commercials. This alarming statistic further proves that television takes an entertainment precedent, even in a two year olds' daily life. This continues to illustrate that parents have not taught their children to "want" to read. Children seem to know how to read when they are "told" to.

Unfortunately some American schoolteachers unknowingly add to the problem of recreational reading by not modeling habits characteristic of a good reader. This is illustrated when author Linda B. Gambrell (1996) asked a group of elementary children what teachers can do to motivate students to read. Responses included:

- "Teachers should let us read more."
- "Read to the class. I always get excited when I hear my favorite book."
- "Make sure there are lots of books. There are not a lot of books in our classroom."

The last comment made by a student was the most powerful indicator that teachers unknowingly influence the classroom habits. The child stated, "Please make sure you do not interrupt us while we are reading." (Gambrell, p. 14) These responses strongly suggest that teachers' role modeling impacts students' reading motivation.

Recreational reading habits are influenced by parents, television and other electronic devices, and teachers. The above statistics substantiate what experts believe, that reading recreationally does not appear to be a consistent habit for the majority of school-age children.

CHAPTER THREE
THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of Literature:

After reviewing literature on improving children's habits in recreational reading, many recommendations were formulated. Recommendations included parental modeling, a decrease in non-reading entertainment, (such as television and other electronic devices), and teacher modeling within an enriched literature environment.

As stated by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1994) several suggestions that parents can do to improve reading habits are as follows:

- Begin reading aloud to your child when the child is a year old or younger
- Continue reading aloud even when child is able to read
- Talk to your child about stories read, so he/she can relate to real life
- Select with your child a comfortable well lit place to read
- Provide a variety of reading materials
- Allow your child to observe you enjoying reading.

Furthermore, Rita Newman, author of "Can't You See I'm Busy?" (1994, p.42), reiterates these suggestions and adds:

- Make a commitment to set aside five or ten minutes of your day to share a book with your child
- Listen to your child proudly reading a story
- Be a part of the audience while your child reads to a sibling
- Give your child his/her own library card.

As an alternative to excessive television viewing and use of other electronic devices, Jim Trelease (1995, p.182) offers these solutions to help fill the television void:

- Parents must make a commitment to fill the void
- Parents must provide crayons and paper
- Parents must teach how to play board games
- Most important parents must pick up books.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1994) supports Mr. Trelease and continues:

- No more than ten hours of television viewing per week
- Computer software should be used as a supplement, NOT a substitute for reading.

Teachers must create an environment conducive to stimulating recreational reading. Linda B. Gambrell (1996) supports this statement and suggests a book-rich classroom environment increases reading motivation. She best illustrates this in her research and states that children selected books from their classroom libraries rather from school, home, and community libraries. A high interest reading program can enhance the reading motivation within a classroom.

Sandy Kaser, author of "Creating a Learning Environment That Invites Connections,"(1995) suggests teachers should do the following:

- Read aloud to students
- Introduce authors
- Require outside reading
- Strategically place books around the room
- Conduct literature book discussion

- Choose realistic stories.

Project Outcomes and Solution Components:

As a result of a modified curriculum, with an emphasis on reading during the period of September 1997 to January 1998, the targeted 2nd, 4th, and 5th grade students would improve habits towards recreational reading. This would be measured by teacher observation, reading logs, and parent, student, and staff surveys.

To accomplish these targeted goals, four strategic procedures were proposed and implemented:

1. A reading corner will be set up in each targeted classroom, providing a well-lit and comfortable place to read.
2. Silent Sustained Reading (S.S.R.)- will be included a minimum of two days per week. This will occur ten minutes per day.
3. Reading incentives will be offered to students October through February.
4. A read aloud time will be allocated for each classroom's daily schedule.

Action Plan For the Interventions:

The following action plan was implemented to improve recreational reading habits among the targeted students.

I. Teacher Observation

   A. Students will be given one fifteen minute period to participate in an activity of their choice in September, October, November, and January.

   B. Teacher will observe and record the students' choices on a checklist.(Appendix D)

II. Surveys- teacher will distribute surveys to staff, parents, and students

   A. Staff surveys- September (Appendix C)

   B. Parent surveys
      1. September (Appendix A)

2. January (Appendix E)

C. Student surveys
1. September (Appendix B)
2. January (Appendix B)

III. Reading Corner

A. An appealing area will be provided to entice students.
1. Carpet
2. Pillows
3. Stuffed animals

B. Reading Materials
1. Magazines
2. Books
3. Encyclopedias
4. Newspapers
5. Comics
6. Books on cassette

IV. Silent Sustained Reading

A. Ten minutes will be provided a minimum of two times a week.

B. Teacher, acting as a role model, will read silently along with class.

C. Reading Buddies
1. Cross-age reading
2. Peer reading

D. D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read)- variation of S.S.R. with time increased to a minimum of thirty minutes.

V. Reading Incentives

A. Book It
1. October through February
2. Individual teacher will set book requirements.
3. Students who meet goal will receive free pizza from Pizza Hut.

B. 600 Minutes
1. January through February
2. Students are required to read 600 minutes in a six-week period.
3. Students who meet goal will receive a free ticket to Great America.

VI. Read Alouds

A. Current Events- Teacher/student will share a current newspaper article that will relate to students' interest.
   1. Minimum of one time a week.
   2. Articles will be placed in Reading Corner.
   3. School C will complete a Current Events sheet (Appendix G).

B. Choral Reading- Entire class will read aloud.
   1. Minimum of one time a week.
   2. Selections will include poetry or predictable books.

C. Teacher/Student Read Aloud- either teacher or student will read selected readings.
   1. Minimum of once a day.
   2. Discussion will take place following.

D. Guest Readers- Any person outside the classroom.

VII. Literature Based Activities

A. Activities will be planned to relate to literature.
   1. Plays
   2. Art projects
   3. Book publishing
   4. Cooking
   5. Writing Activities
   6. Videos

B. Variety of teaching strategies
   1. Graphic organizers
   2. Cooperative learning groups

Methods of Assessment:

The following methods of assessment were used:

- Teacher observation September, October, November, January (Appendix D)
- Reading logs September-February (Appendix F)
- Parent Survey September and January (Appendix A,E)
- Student Survey September and January (Appendix B)
- Staff Survey September (Appendix C)

The assessments were given to measure the growth of recreational reading habits.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention:

The objective of this action research project was to increase positive attitudes toward recreational reading. To implement the preceeding objective, the following interventions were established: 1) Silent Sustained Reading; 2) reading incentives; and 3) read alouds. Finally, literature based activities were integrated into the language arts program.

Reading corners were created to entice students to read. Carpeting, pillows, stuffed animals, and comfortable seating were available on a daily basis. The reading corners contained a variety of materials to peruse. These choices included maps, books, encyclopedias, newspapers, comics, and books on cassettes. Students were given the option to check out any of these items.

Silent Sustained Reading programs were provided a minimum of two times a week for ten minutes. Teachers were active role models by reading silently during this time also. Students and teachers were able to choose the location of where they wanted to enjoy his/her book. Included were the use of pillows, carpet squares, and beanbag chairs.

Another motivational strategy that was successfully implemented was reading buddies. This consisted of cross-age reading as well as peer reading. Cross-age readers were from varying grade levels. For example, fifth grade students read once a week to

second grade students for fifteen minutes in School A. Peer reading included two students pairing together to share a book of interest within a ten minute time frame.

Drop Everything And Read was an activity apparently enjoyed by the majority of the students, according to teacher perceptions. Upon occasion, students were told by their teacher to "drop everything and read." Students would stop whatever they were doing and read a book for a minimum of thirty minutes.

Reading incentives that were employed included Book It and 600 Minutes. Each teacher provided the students with a monthly goal from October to February in the Pizza Hut sponsored Book It program. Seventy-one percent of the targeted students successfully reached the goals four out of five months. The Six Flags Great America 600 Minutes reading incentive program required six hundred minutes to be read over six weeks from January to February. If students accomplished this goal, a free admission ticket to Great America would be awarded. This program was not as successful as Book It, since parents expressed concern that admission prices, parking, and other related expenses would be an undue burden.

Read alouds were successfully introduced in a variety of ways. These included current events, choral reading, teacher-student read alouds, as well as guest readers. Current events of interest were shared weekly by students or teachers. Discussions followed pertaining to the subject. Articles were made available in the reading corner for further investigation. Choral reading was an activity that occurred a minimum of once a week involving the entire class reading simultaneously. The selections included poetry and predictable books (elements of repetition). These were materials integrated within current themes of study. Read alouds occurred a minimum of five times a week. These

included the teacher reading a novel or the students reading aloud. Discussions verifying comprehension followed.

Finally, guest readers were invited into the targeted classrooms at least once a month. These included administrators, school board members, parents, grandparents, custodians, mayors, and the community librarians.

Literature-based activities were carefully organized and executed in all the targeted classrooms. Schools A, B, and C implemented activities to promote recreational reading on a daily basis during the months of September through December. The following summations will depict all these types of activities by Schools A, B, and C.

In September, School A and C began their interventions around the theme of friendships. School A selected stories to convey this theme were "Matthew & Tilly" by Rebecca C. Jones and "Franklin's Friend" by Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark. After reading and discussing these stories, students participated in numerous activities. These activities included creating Venn diagrams, comparing and contrasting the two stories (Appendix H); role-playing conflicts occurring in friendships; and publishing a class friendship book.

School C focused on friendship focusing on appreciating and accepting differences. Students began by reading three stories in the basal reader: "How Juan Got Home" by Peggy Mann, "Just Because I'm Left Handed" by Linda McCollum Brown, and "Making Room for Uncle Joe" by Ada B. Litchfield. After reading and discussing these stories, students participated in numerous activities. These included viewing a "Life Goes On" video, book and vocabulary discussion teams, skits, and book and journal buddies.

School B focused thematic activities around thunderstorms. The teacher read "Thundercake" by Patricia Polacco aloud to the students. An activity that integrated technology was the computer program "The Weather Tracker's Kit." Students were able to display the differentiation of the facts verses the fiction that was discussed from the literature. Another hands-on activity was the actual creation of the thunder cake.

During the month of October the students of School A studied the author Marc Brown, the creator of Arthur. Students read several of these stories and created their own cartoons. (Appendix I) A class graph entitled "Our Favorite Arthur Story" was constructed. Other activities included playing the game "Arthur Goes to the Library" in cooperative groups, and journal writing activities incorporating Arthur.

School B focused the month of October thematic activities around amphibians. Specifically frogs and toads were the center of literature based activities. The novel, "Frog and Toads are Friends" by Arnold Lobel was read and discussed by the students. Activities included prompt-based journal writing and cooperative group Venn diagramming. (Appendix J) Upon culmination of this unit, frog headbands (Appendix K) were created for the game leapfrog.

School C expanded the friendship theme to include family in the month of October. The students read the book "The War with Grandpa" by Robert Kimmel Smith. Activities implemented were study vocabulary buddies, role-playing, dioramas, murals, and skits. Throughout this novel, poetry selections regarding family and friends were chorally read on a daily basis.

During the month of November, School A students were introduced to biographies. The students chose from a list of people to read about. After reading the

biography, each student used various art media to create a puppet that depicted that person. This unit was concluded with a class puppet show. Each student was required to cite three facts about the puppet.

School B focussed on the cold weather of November. The focus of these activities was the effects of this weather on humans and animals. A story read to discuss the effects was "The Mitten" by Jan Berett. Extension activities included sewing of paper mittens and coloring animal characters to use in the retelling the events of the story with a cooperative buddy.

In November, School C focused on Native Americans. This study centered on the novel "Snowbound in Hidden Valley" by Holly Wilson. Activities included making a friendship cookbook, journal buddies, cooperative vocabulary teams, and plays. A culminating activity was having each student adopted into a fictional Indian tribe. Headbands and tales were created on how their Indian name was bestowed upon them.

During the month of December, School A read aloud the novel "Mr. Popper's Penguins" by Richard and Florence Atwater. Activities included webbing and a computer generated class book stating penguin facts. The unit was culminated by a "Penguin Day". Students portrayed penguins by wearing black and white attire. In addition to dressing up, students watched the movie, "Mr. Popper's Penguins".

In School B, the theme for December was Kwanzaa. The book, "My First Kwanzaa" by Deborah Newton, was read and the seven principles were discussed. In preparation for the school-wide celebration, Kwanzaa tablemats, bookmarks, necklaces, and booklets were created by the students.

School C, in the month of December, focused on the different genres of literature through an activity called "The Reading Expedition". Students were given a genre to read every two weeks and to complete an activity page and summary of the book. These pages were put into a booklet and placed into the classroom library.

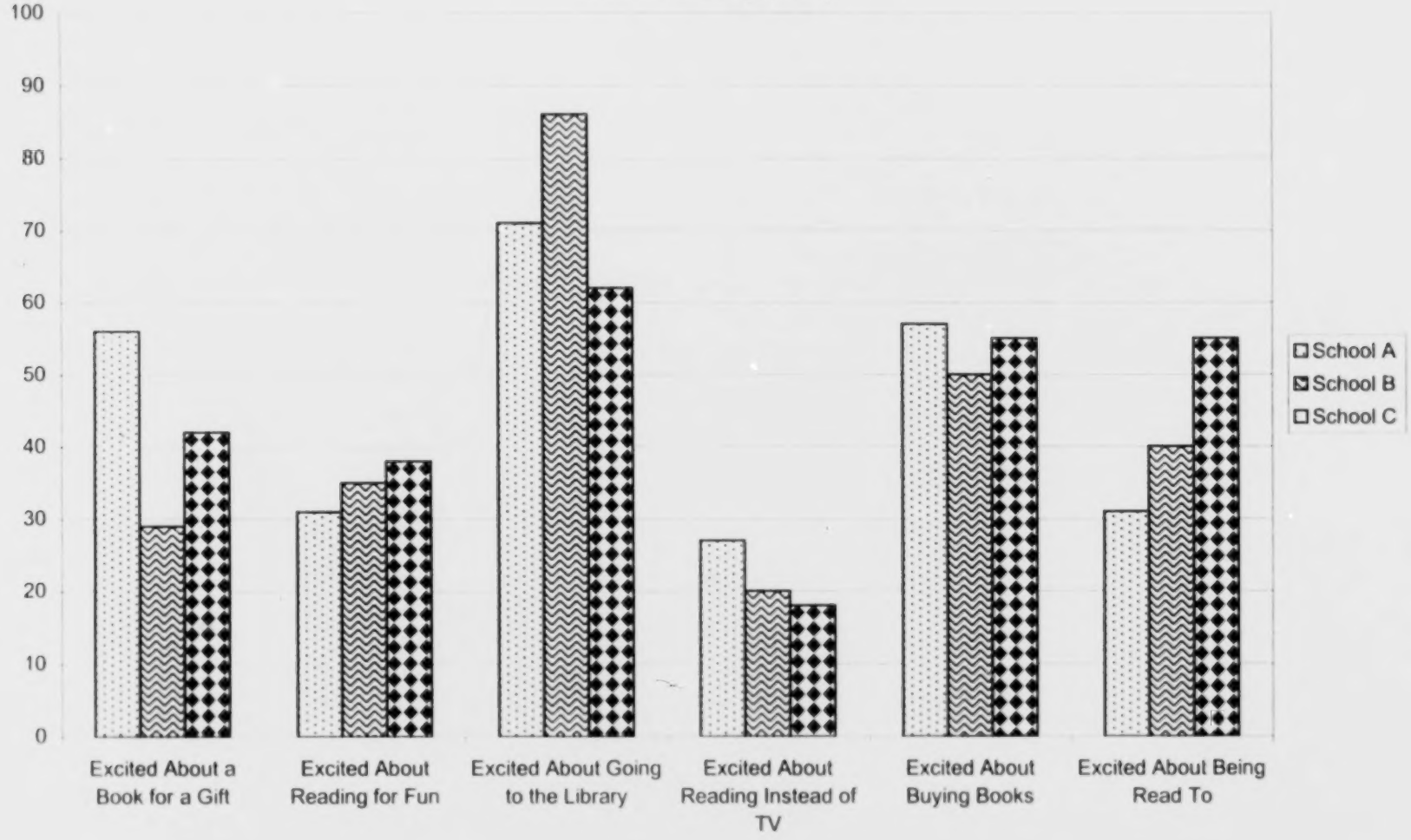
Presentation of Analysis of Results:

At the conclusion of this action research project, surveys were readministered to the students (Appendix B) and parents (Appendix E) of Schools A, B, and C. Figures 10 and 11 depict the data collected by the researchers.

In Figure 10, The Student Survey, growth was witnessed in some significant areas. In September, less than 40% of the students from the targeted schools were excited about receiving a book for a gift. In contrast in January School A's excitement doubled and School C's increased by 12%. When analyzing how students felt about reading for fun, School B increased their excitement by 13% from September. School C increased their excitement by 50% from September.

In January the targeted students displayed an increase in excitement toward reading versus television viewing. School C noticed a significant increase in the purchasing of books by 35%. School C also increased their excitement about being read to from 41% in September to 54% in January. Whereas in Schools A and B, students expressed independence and wanted to assume the responsibility of reading on their own.

Figure 10
Student Survey (Jan.)

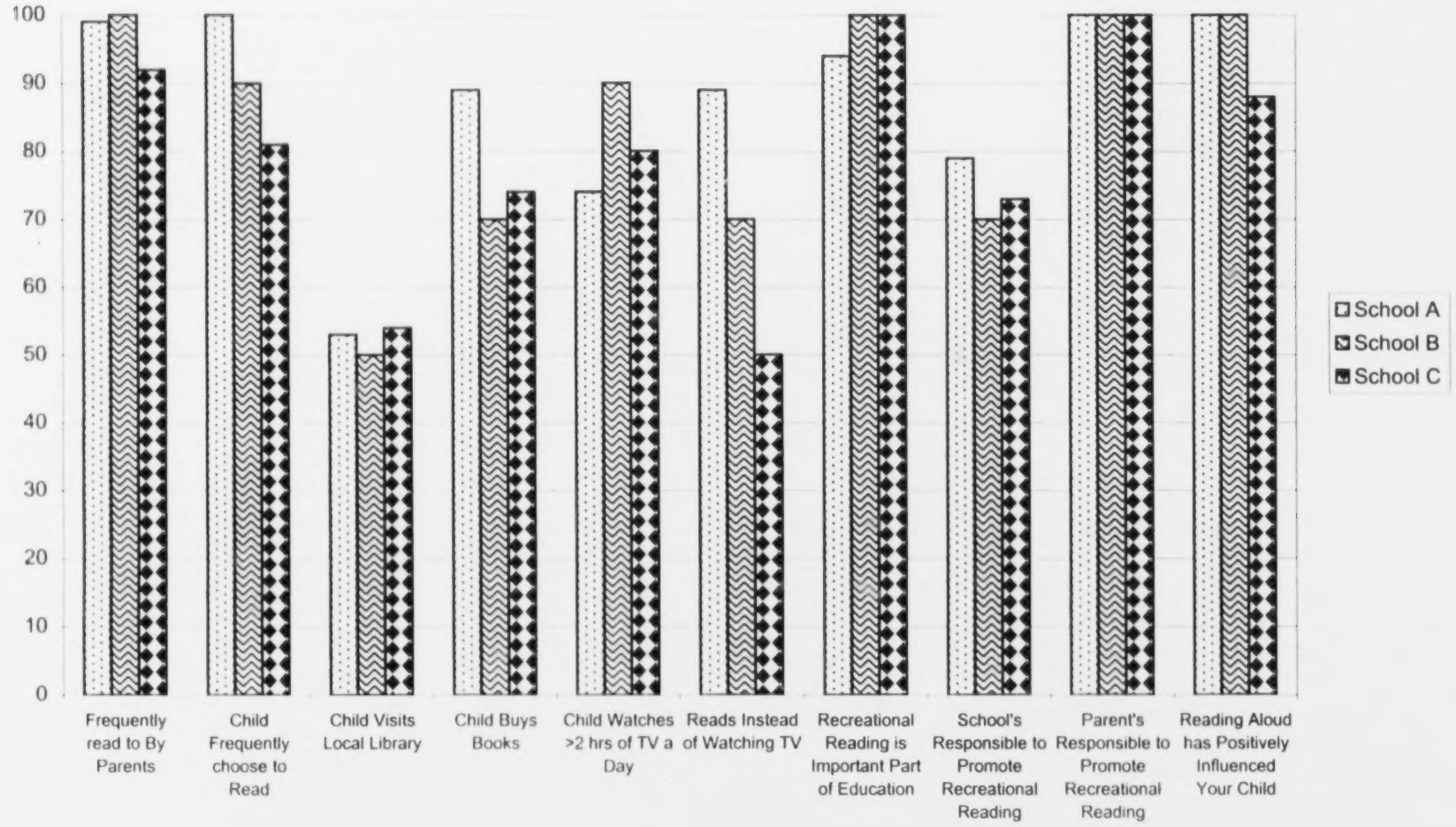


In Figure 11, The Parent Survey noted a tremendous amount of positive changes. In the targeted schools, the parents observed an increase in their children choosing to read in their free time of 59% or more. An increase of children's visits to their local libraries in School A showed an increase of 36%. Both Schools B and C noted an increase of library visits by 50%.

Another positive change that the parents observed were their children choosing to read instead of watching television. The range of choice toward reading increased from 50-89%. In January, parents were again asked about the statement "Reading aloud has positively influenced your child." An increase of over 50% of the parents surveyed felt that reading aloud has positively influenced their child.

The following statements will summarize the change in opinion of whose responsibility it is to promote recreational reading. In September, in School A, 65% of the parents felt it was their responsibility. In School B, 31% felt it was their responsibility. In School C, 33% felt it was their responsibility. After only a five month time period, 100% of the parents in Schools A, B, and C, realized that it was their responsibility to promote recreational reading.

Figure 11
Parent Survey (Jan.)



Conclusions and Recommendations:

Based on the results of teachers' observations, parent and student surveys, the researchers conclude that students' habits in recreational reading has improved. When surveyed the students' perceptions did not show significant increase in all areas. However, the teachers and parents observed that interventions appear to have had a positive effect on students' habits toward recreational reading. According to the results of the most recent parent survey, 100% of the parents realized that it is their responsibility to promote recreational reading. During free time periods, teachers observed an increase in students choosing to read verses other activities.

The design of the reading corners and classroom libraries was similar in all three targeted schools. The atmosphere invited students to curl up and enjoy a book. The students were exposed to a variety of genres to choose from. Consequently, students' habits improved toward recreational reading. Researchers recommend an enticing reading corner that appeals to the students. It should contain the following objects: stuffed animals, comfortable seating, and pillows. A variety of reading materials should consist of magazines, books, encyclopedias, newspapers, comics, and books on cassettes and be "readily" available.

Researchers further recommend a Silent Sustained Reading (S.S.R.) program. Teachers of any grade level should provide a time appropriate for their age level for reading a self-selected book. An important component of this program is the teacher role modeling by reading silently along with the students. One variation, similar to S.S.R., is Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R.). The teacher announces to the class, "Drop

Everything And Read," creating a break from the daily routine. The amount of time that is provided is increased beyond the daily time allotted for S.S.R. A second variation of S.S.R. is reading buddies. The teacher assigns two students to read together during S.S.R. This could be within the teacher's classroom or with various grade levels. An example of using this intervention with varying grade levels is having a 5th grade student read to a 1st grade student.

The researchers also recommended using read alouds to improve recreational reading habits. The teacher, guest reader, or a student reads from a genre listed below to the entire class. Books to share with the students are poetry books, chapter books, and newspaper articles. The researchers recommend the read alouds occur once a day.

A variation of this intervention is choral reading. This consists of having the entire class read poetry or predictable books simultaneously a minimum of once a week.

In addition to the above activities, literature based activities should also be used. These activities would be centered on a theme or a novel. Activities to incorporate are plays, cooking, videos, art projects, classroom book publishing, and other writing activities. Strategies to implement these activities are graphic organizers and cooperative learning groups.

Lastly, a reading incentive that aided in improving recreational reading habits was the Pizza Hut sponsored, "Book It!" Each individual teacher sets a monthly book requirement from October through February. Upon reaching the requirement, a student receives a certificate for a free small pan pizza. If all students make the monthly goals four out of the five months, the entire class receives a free pizza party.

After evaluation of all the data collected and analyzed, researchers recommend the joint efforts' and responsibilities are place upon the students' families and school districts. Their duty is to continue positive influences with recreational reading habits. It is advantageous that society and individuals develop these life long habits. Trelease (1995) supports this with his statement "Reading is the ultimate weapon- destroying ignorance, poverty, and despair before they can destroy us. A nation that doesn't read much doesn't know much." (p. xxxvi)

The expectations placed upon parents and educators are to role model positive recreational reading habits. This includes exposing the children to various print mediums from infancy to adulthood. As a result, future generations will conquer ignorance, poverty, and despair.

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REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Parent Letter/Survey

September 1997

Dear Parents,

I am currently working towards my Masters of Arts degree in Teaching and Leadership through Saint Xavier University. I am presently involved in starting my Action Research Project. My topic involves "Improving Students' Habits in Recreational Reading." It would help me if you could take a few moments to fill out the attached survey. Please return the survey by Friday, September 26th.

If you would like any suggestions on how to promote reading at home, feel free to contact me. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Appendix A (continued)

Parent Survey September
"Improving Students' Habits Toward Recreational Reading"

Recreational Reading-- Reading outside the classroom for fun.

Please circle your responses.

1. Throughout your child's lifetime, how frequently have you read to your child?

   Always Sometimes Seldom Never

2. On an average week, how often does your child choose to read for enjoyment? (This may include picture books, magazines, comics, newspapers, etc....)

   Always Sometimes Seldom Never

3. How often does your child visit the local library for unassigned reading materials?

   Always Sometimes Seldom Never

4. How often does your child like to buy books through book clubs or local bookstores?

   Always Sometimes Seldom Never

Appendix A (continued)

5. How often does your child watch television more than two hours per day?

   Always Sometimes Seldom Never

6. How often does your child choose to read instead of watching television?

   Always Sometimes Seldom Never

7. Recreational reading is an important part of your child's education.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. It is the school's responsibility to promote recreational reading.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. It is the parent's responsibility to promote recreational reading.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. Reading aloud to your child has positively influenced him/her to read for "fun".

    Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Thank you for your input. Your signature is optional.

_____

Student Survey

excited

happy

okay

unhappy

How do you feel about:

1. getting a book for a present?

2. reading for fun at home?

3. going to the library to check out books, magazines, comics, etc..?

4. reading instead of watching television?

5. buying books to read for fun?

6. when someone reads to you?

Appendix C
Teacher Survey on Reading Habits

Grade Level Taught: _____
Section A: Reading Activities

1. How many times in a week do you read aloud to your students?

   0-1 2-3 4 or more

2. How many times a week do you provide time for Silent Reading?

   0-1 2-3 4 or more

3. How many times in a month do you show a video to your students? .

   0-1 2-3 4 or more

4. Does your class participate in any Reading Incentive Programs (Book It, 6oo Minutes, etc.)?

   Yes No

5. Does your class participate in Book Clubs? (Arrow, Troll, etc.)

   Yes No

If yes, in the average month, how many students place an order?

_____

Appendix C (continued)

Section B: Professional Opinions about Reading

6. When your students finish an assignment, many of them pick up a book on their own to read.

   25% or less 50% 75% Almost everyone

7. Sustained Silent Reading should be a part of every school's curriculum.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Recreational Reading should be an important part of your students' education.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. The school should assume responsibility for promoting Recreational Reading.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. Parent's should assume responsibility for promoting Recreational Reading.

    Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Appendix D
Teacher Observation Checklist

Free Time: 15 Minutes

	# of students who choose to read	*# of students who choose another activity*
September _____, 1997		
October _____, 1997		
November _____, 1997		
January _____, 1997		

Appendix E
Parent Letter/Survey

January 5, 1998

Dear Parents,

As you are aware, I am currently working towards my Masters of Arts degree in Teaching and Leadership through Saint Xavier University. I am presently involved in finishing my Action Research Project on the topic of "Improving Students' Habits in Recreational Reading." It would help me if you could, again, take a few moments to fill out the attached survey. The purpose of this is to note any change in the recreational reading habits of your child since the beginning of the school year. Please return the survey by Friday, January 9th.

Thank you for your cooperation in assisting me throughout the year. If you would like any suggestions on how to promote reading for fun at home, feel free to contact me. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,
Miss Papp

Appendix E (continued)

Parent Survey January
"Improving Students' Habits Toward Recreational Reading"

Recreational Reading-- Reading outside the classroom for fun.

Please circle your responses.

1. Throughout your child's lifetime, how frequently have you read to your child?

   Frequently Sometimes Seldom Rarely

2. On an average week, how often does your child choose to read for enjoyment? (This may include picture books, magazines, comics, newspapers, etc....)

   Frequently Sometimes Seldom Rarely

3. How often does your child visit the local library for unassigned reading materials?

   Frequently Sometimes Seldom Rarely

4. How often does your child like to buy books through book clubs or local bookstores?

   Frequently Sometimes Seldom Rarely

Appendix E (continued)

5. How often does your child watch television more than two hours per day?

Frequently Sometimes Seldom Rarely

6. How often does your child choose to read instead of watching television?

Frequently Sometimes Seldom Rarely

7. How often do you, yourself, read recreationally?

Frequently Sometimes Seldom Rarely

8. Recreational reading is an important part of your child's education.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. It is the school's responsibility to promote recreational reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. It is the parent's responsibility to promote recreational reading.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. Reading aloud to your child has positively influenced him/her to read for "fun".

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Appendix E (continued)

Thank you for your input. Your signature is optional.

_____

MY READING LOG

Name _____

Date	Title/Author	Genre

CURRENT EVENTS

NAME _____ DATE OF ARTICLE _____

ARTICLE TITLE _____

AUTHOR OF ARTICLE _____

TYPE (WORLD, LOCAL, SPORTS) _____

THIS INTERESTED ME BECAUSE _____

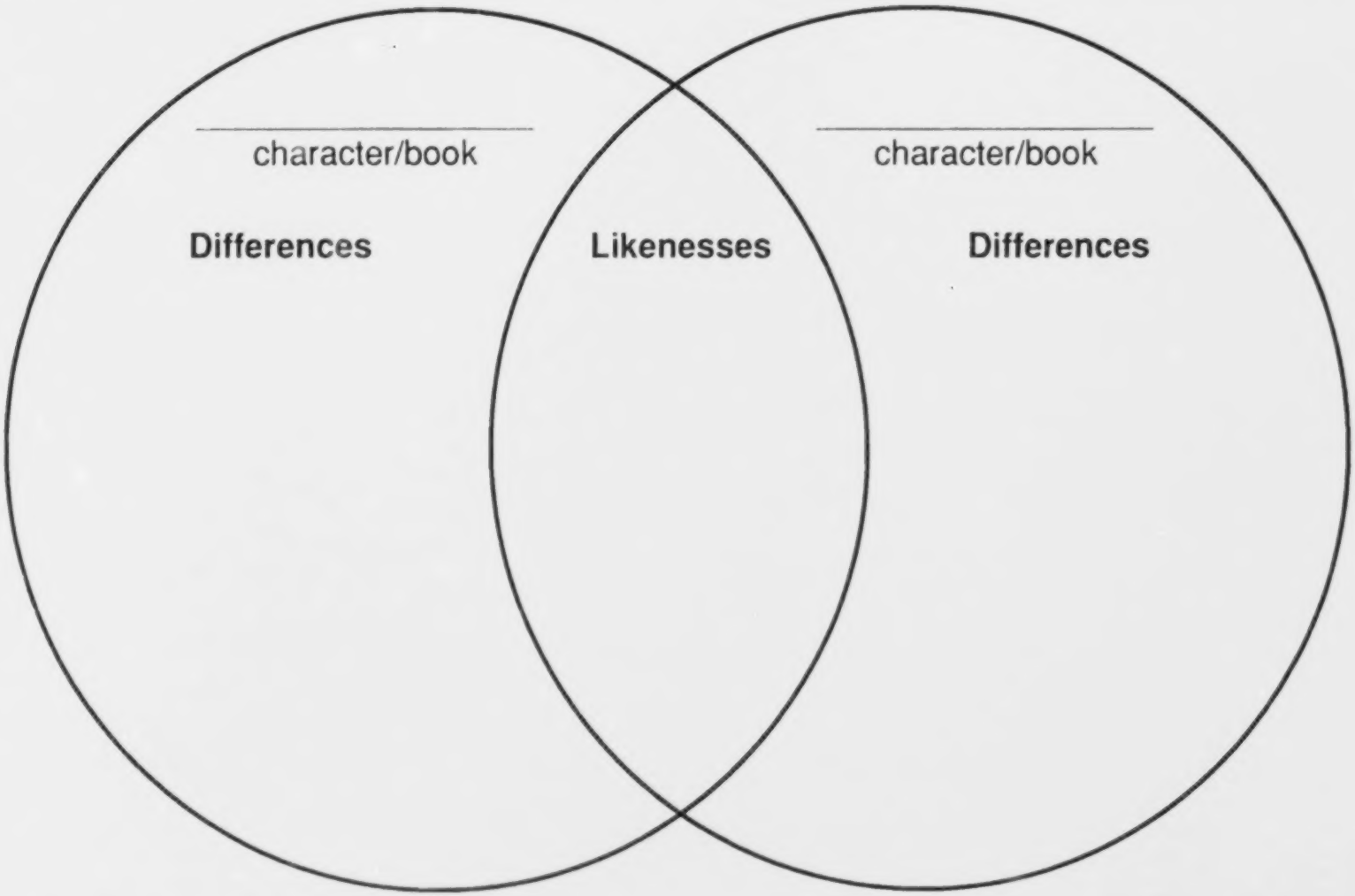
_____

_____

_____

_____ 's Venn Diagram

Write the names of the characters or books you are comparing on the lines and list their differences in the appropriate sections. In the center, list the likenesses.



My Arthur™ Cartoon

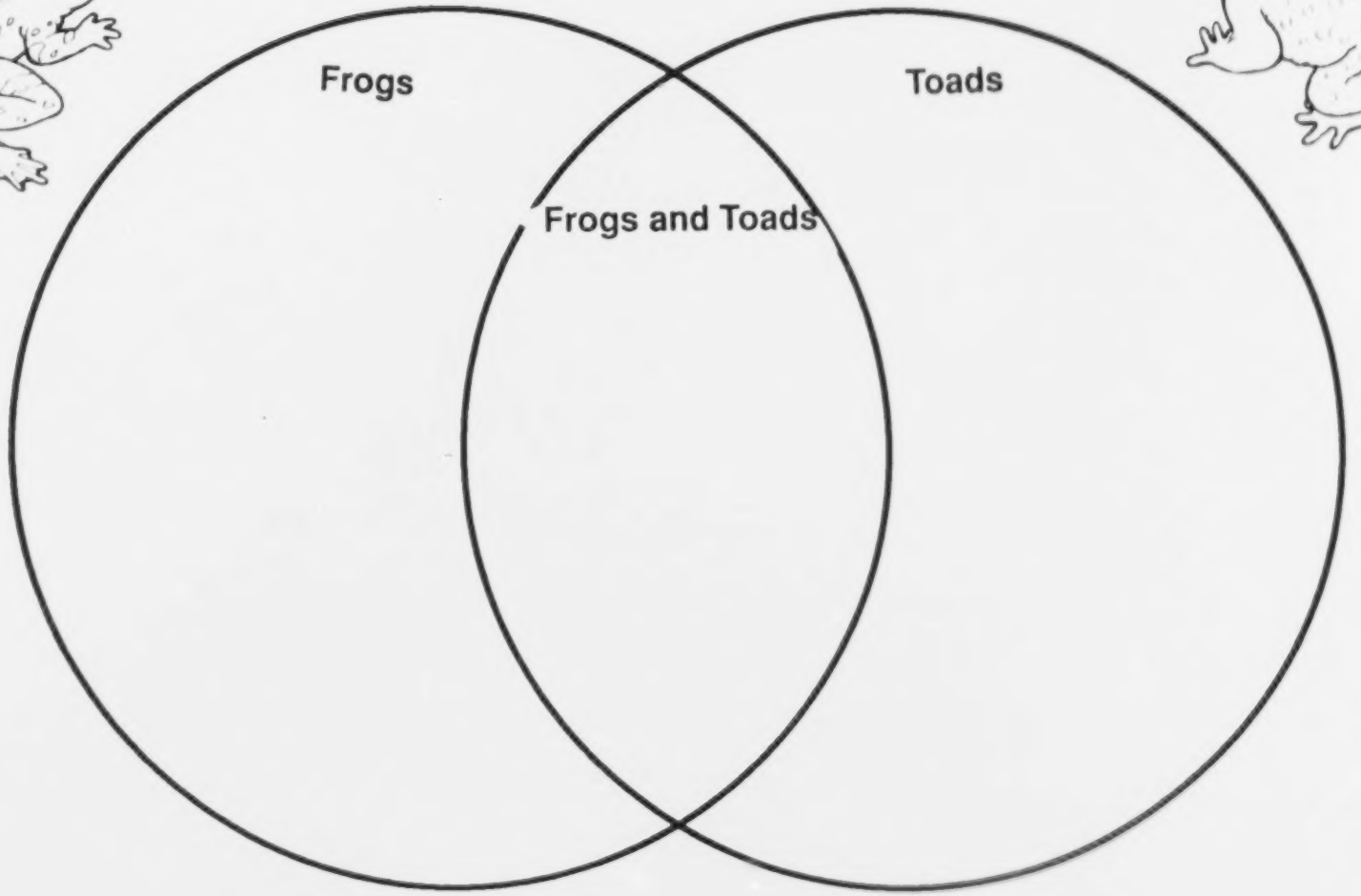
My cartoon for: (title)

By: (name)

1	2	3
4	5	6

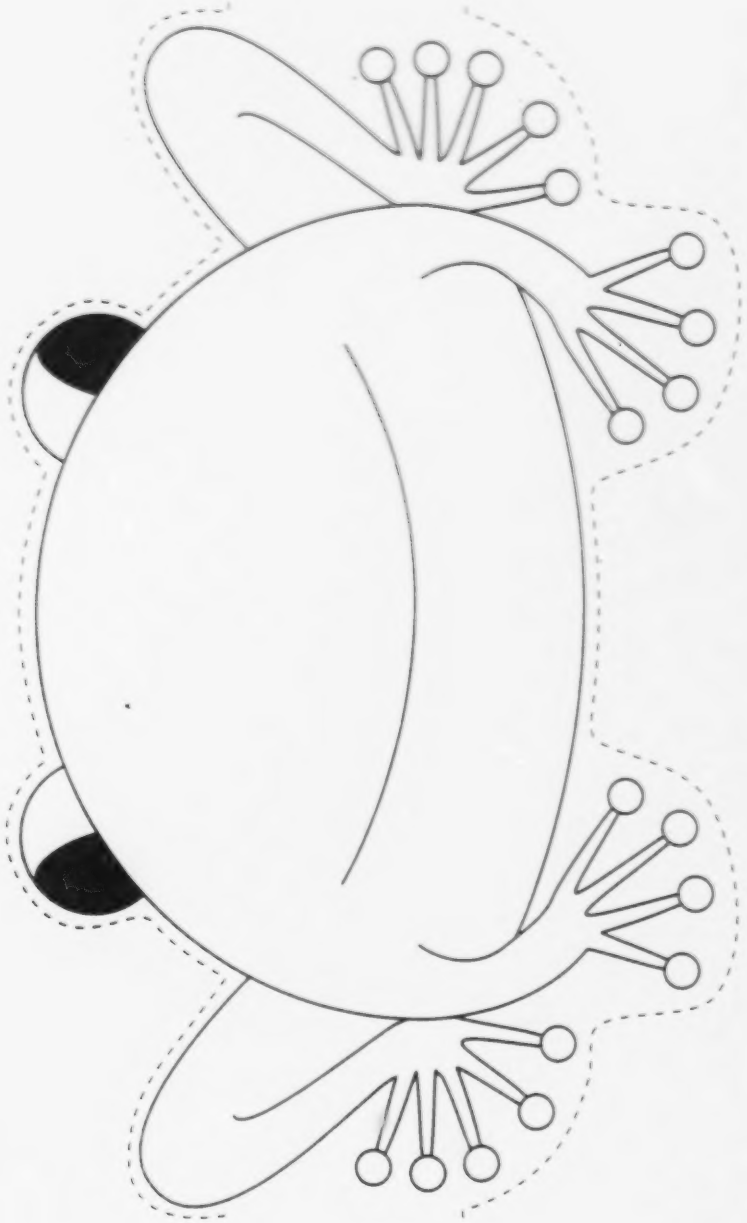
VENN DIAGRAM

Frogs and Toads



Frog Headband

(Enlarge to fit head and add strip of paper to complete back of headband.)



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